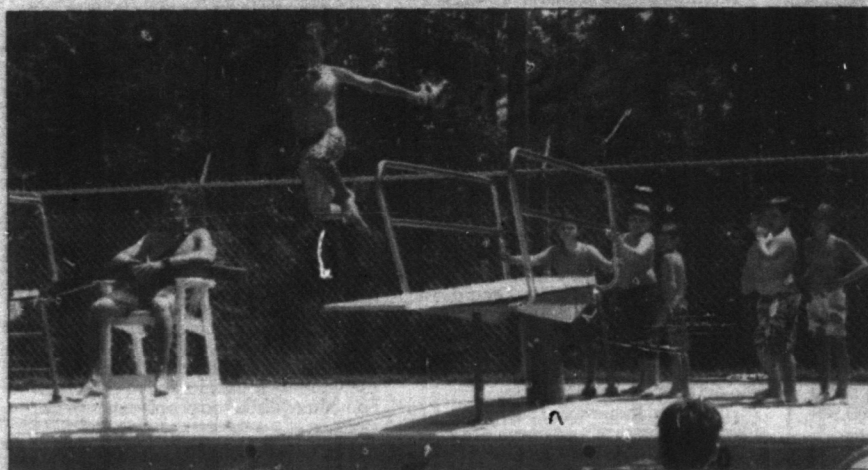


CENTRAL HILLS RETREAT



DIVING INTO CAMP LIFE — Participants in the Central Hills Retreat summer ministry program take a cool dive into the Junior Olympic swimming pool at the state Royal Ambassadors camp in the woods of Attala County near Kosciusko. (Photo by Tony Martin)

Serious fun, serious commitments

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

The summer camping season at Central Hills Retreat near Kosciusko completed a successful 2012 summer season, hosting a total of 2,458 participants during three weeks of Summer Missions Camps for Boys and a Lad/Dad Weekend camp that numbered an additional 362 campers.

The most important numbers: the state Royal Ambassadors camp ministry, managed by the Men's Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, produced 45 professions of faith, 67 rededications, and three life vocation commitments.

The facility also hosted five co-ed children camps with a total of 798 campers registered; Mississippi Kids Camp with a total of 305 boys and girls attending; a pair of three-day basketball camps for girls and boys with 34

attending; two four-day youth camps with a total of 314 attending; and one Bible Thrills Camp with 34 attending.

These co-ed ministries produced an additional 115 professions of faith, 49 rededications, 20 life vocation commitments, and eight other for a total of 192 decisions.

"Our mission statement is to reach Mississippi and the world for Jesus," said camp manager Jim Ray. "I believe it was the Barna group that came up with the statistics, that something like 50% of people who make decisions for Christ either do so in a camp setting or at Vacation Bible School. So, we do it to reach people but there are a lot of ways to reach people. So why do we do it the way we do?"

"Well, there isn't a TV set turned on anywhere, there are no radios. It's just quiet. You hear birds. You hear the water lapping the bank at the lake.

You see turkey and deer. That's all natural, and I think it puts the mind at ease and comforts troubled hearts.

"A good number of kids that come to camp are non-churched, or have little church, and here we can get their attention. We do camp because we have the prettiest cathedral in the state. When you put a camper with a counselor for a week, and that counselor has shown signs of maturity before they came here, the camper starts to understand the value and benefit of a closer walk with God.

"Camp can teach these things on so many different levels. Imagine if you're thirty feet in the air hanging onto a zip line, scared to death, but deep in the back of your mind you know you're tethered and not going to fall. Think about how many times that happens in our walk

see RETREAT on p. 6

Student Life, Inc., merges with LifeWay

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Student Life, Inc., officially became part of the LifeWay family of resources on August 15.

Student Life, based in Birmingham, Al., has provided Christian summer camps and conferences for children and youth since 1993. Because of the unique differences and emphases of each organization's camp

offerings and locations, leaders do not expect significant changes will be necessary in programming or locations.

LifeWay Christian Resources and Student Life, Inc., minister to more than

see LIFEWAY on p. 4

Miss. pastor to serve on Calvinism advisory team

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP and local reports) — Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee President Frank Page announced on Aug. 15 the members of an advisory team who will help him craft a strategic plan to bring together various groups within the convention who hold different opinions on the issue of Calvinism.

Among the 16 members of the group, which will conduct its first meeting Aug. 29-30 in Nashville, is Eric Hankins, senior pastor of First Church, Oxford.

"My goal is to develop a strategy whereby people of various theological persuasions can purposely work together in missions and evangelism," Page told Baptist Press.

At some point in the coming weeks and months, he said, "most likely there will be the crafting of a statement regarding the strategy on how we can work together."

"I want to be very clear: This is not an attempt to redo the theological consensus that we have in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000," Page said. "It is practical in nature, not doctrinal."

Page, currently serving as interim pastor of First Church, Jackson, emphasized that the group is "not an official committee" of the convention. He also said additional names could be added to the group. "It's a group of helpers helping Frank Page come up with some sort of strategy document," he said.

David Dockery, president of Union University in Jackson, Tenn., helped Page put together the list.

"We wanted people who truly represented the various constituencies involved in this theological discussion," said Page, who in May and then in June publicly said he was working on naming such a group. Following are the members of the advisory team, in addition to Hankins:

■ Daniel Akin, president, Southeastern Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C.

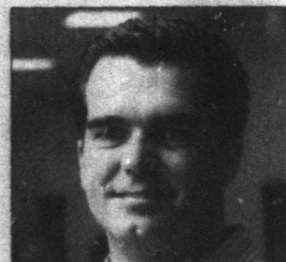
■ Mark Dever, senior pastor, Capitol Hill Church, Washington D.C.

■ David Dockery, president, Union University, Jackson, Tenn.

■ Leo Endel, executive director, Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention.

■ Ken Fentress, senior pastor, Montrose Church, Rockville, Md.

■ Timothy George, dean, Beeson Divinity School, Birmingham, Al.



HANKINS

■ Johnny Hunt, pastor, First Church, Woodstock, Ga.

■ Tammi Ledbetter, homemaker and layperson, Inglewood Church, Grand Prairie, Texas.

■ Steve Lemke, provost, director of the Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry at New Orleans Seminary.

■ Fred Luter, senior pastor, Franklin Avenue Church, New Orleans; president, Southern Baptist Convention.

■ R. Albert Mohler Jr., president, Southern Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

■ Paige Patterson, president, Southwestern Seminary, Fort Worth.

■ Stephen Rummage, senior pastor, Bell Shoals Church, Brandon, Fla.

■ Daniel Sanchez, professor of missions, Southwestern Seminary, Fort Worth.

■ Jimmy Scroggins, senior pastor, First Church, Beach, Fla.

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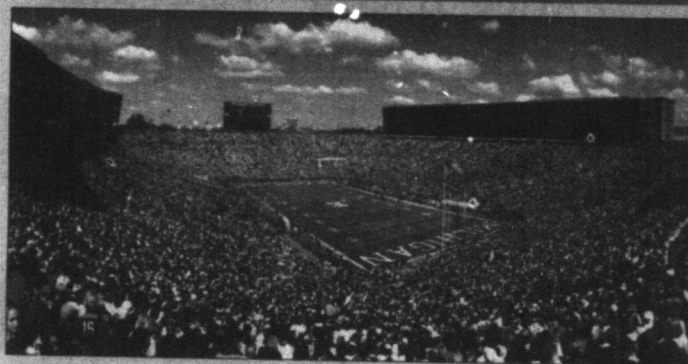
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AUG 28 2012



From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS



KING-SIZE FOOTBALL — Michigan Stadium in Ann Arbor, Mi., home of the University of Michigan Wolverines football team, is the largest stadium in terms of seating in the United States. Official capacity is 109,901, but nearly 115,000 people packed the stadium for the Michigan/Notre Dame contest on Sept. 10, 2011. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons/Andrew Horne)

Getting it right

The excitement is palpable. It's the topic of almost every hallway conversation at work. At home, couches and easy chairs have been moved to the hallowed half-circle position around the big screens. Massive amounts of money are being spent purchasing the latest electronics and HD cable TV upgrades. Thousands of DVRs are being programmed at this very moment.

Is it the trailer for the next Batman movie? Maybe the latest report on the most current Kardashian family scandal? Perhaps the next episode of *The Walking Dead*?

No. All the breathless anticipation can be summed up in the one question with which everyone identifies and which unites us all: "Are you ready for some football?"

As in years past, talk of next football season began before the end of last football season. Through the summer we occupied our hours in front of the television with the Olympics and any number of lesser sports, but the king was always on our minds. Football!

This season, there will be enough high-style stadium clothes bought to outfit a small country. There will be enough food sacrificed to the football gods to blanket the moon and, unfortunately, enough alcoholic beverages consumed to float the U.S. Navy's fleet.

Fanatics (from which we get the word, "fans," of course) are photographing and displaying their season tickets on Facebook, so proud are they of their teams — even if those teams don't have much of a shot at success. Bumper stickers and license plate

frames abound, while mascot flags fly from every automobile window whether or not it's game day.

Faithful followers will travel hundreds of miles and, inside the American versions of the Roman Colosseum, pack 100,000 deep for what amounts to a single hour of gladiatorial splendor. We will bear any expense, endure any hardship, and remove any obstacle that threatens to keep us from our football games.

Would that we dedicated as much of our energy to the matters of eternity as we do to our ephemeral pursuits. Would that we took as great care to honor the things of heaven as we do the things of earth. Would that we were so uncontrollably enthusiastic about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the Great Commission task that he left us to accomplish (Matt. 28:18-20).

What if worshippers of Christ filled those 100,000-plus seats every Sunday, bursting with excitement and anticipation for what the Lord was about to do? What if we were cheering so loudly for Jesus that people could hear us for blocks around the stadium? What if we streamed from those massive meeting places determined to recruit as many people as possible to join our side and cheer on our team?

It's too easy to simply chuckle about our priorities being a little mixed up. It's a lame promise we make to do better next week, or next season, or next year. Make sure your priorities are in the right order, and help your family, friends, and fellow church members to get it right.

Before it's too late.

Words and actions matter

I am thankful that the August 15 shooting at the Family Research Council (FRC) in Washington, D.C. was not worse than it was, thanks, in part, to the heroic actions of a security guard. We pray for the security guard and his swift recovery.

When an incident such as this occurs, we often find ourselves stepping back and trying to connect the dots. We wonder, "What led to this? How can people leap from debate across the chasm of civility to violence?"

Regardless of the scenario or your side of the political fence, we need to consider these actions within two frameworks.

The first framework is how the harsh rhetoric of our day sometimes overshadows the tragedies that have occurred. One example was the conversation just after the Tucson shooting of U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords by Jerad Lee Loughner in January 2011. In addition to seriously wounding Giffords, Loughner killed six people and injured 12 others.

Conservative commentators were quickly criticized for using perceived violent imagery like "targeting" in public comments prior to Loughner's assault on Giffords and the others. Rather than dealing with the motives and background of the attacker, the discourse — to use a very generous term — quickly turned accusatory toward people who did not pull the trigger.

The second framework I suggest we consider is the silence of many people in cases of the suicides of bullied teens and young adults, many of whom are from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. A quick news search will reveal a number of homosexual teens who, after relentless bullying, chose suicide as the best way to deal with their pain. This is tragic, of course, but there is an overwhelming silence from many evangelicals.

If careless accusations in the wake of the Arizona shootings are morally wrong, it follows that the careful silence in the wake of bully-related suicides is morally wrong. Both frameworks can be helpful and sobering as we consider issues of words and violence.

Of course, we often cannot pinpoint what causes someone to go on a shooting rampage or use brutal language and physical violence against a classmate, but we need to acknowledge that our words matter, and the further we move away from civil discourse the more we open ourselves up to the poten-



Guest opinion
with Ed Stetzer

tial for people to act out of their anger and bitterness toward each other. We must stop ignoring (or distorting) reality.

Here are some facts that seem to be confirmed from the shooting at the Family Research Council:

■ The Family Research Council is a non-profit group in support of traditional marriage and has advocated for initiatives like California's Proposition 8, which banned homosexual marriage in that state.

■ The Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, AL, has declared the FRC a "hate group."

■ Many people have decided that being in favor of the traditional definition of marriage is a "hateful" thing (witness the recent Chick-fil-A flare-up).

■ When people are considered "haters," they are easy to dismiss and marginalize. Sometimes disturbed people can turn to violence.

■ We don't know for sure what happened, though reports say a homosexual activist came into the building carrying a bag that contained 15 Chick-fil-A sandwiches and shot the security guard. We do know that in almost all of these cases, the shooter does indeed turn out to be a disturbed individual.

Yet, if the left calls everyone who disagrees with them on homosexuality "haters" (about half of America, according to surveys), the loss of credibility is substantial. If news writers and pundits are happy to label those who support traditional marriage as "anti-gay," and label organizations that speak consistently for traditional marriage as "hate groups," it seems almost a given that someone eventually will decide to put down the "haters."

On the flip side, if those who support

see STETZER on p. 7

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Southern Baptists continue ministry at Penn State

BRENTWOOD, Tenn. (BP) — Johnny Pons has experienced God's sense of humor. Having been reared in Hendersonville, Tn., and First Church there, he grew up around Southeastern Conference football pulling for Vanderbilt and Alabama.

Pennsylvania State University in State College, Pa., was the "Beast of the East" and Pons admitted he "hated" the school — strictly from the perspective of football.

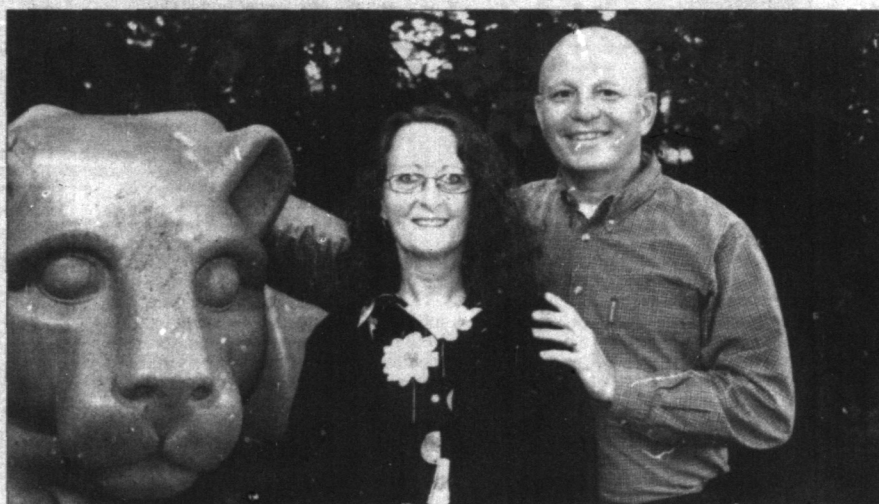
Fast forward a couple of decades. Pons has long graduated from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, and he and wife Kathy have answered God's call to campus ministry, serving at none other than Penn State.

Pons has come to respect the school that has a strong presence in Pennsylvania. "One in 70 Pennsylvanians are Penn Staters," he said. "We knew we could come in and hopefully influence a broader region with the Gospel."

Pons has done that. He has represented Southern Baptists, a minority on campus and in the greater community, as director of New Life Fellowship at Penn State for 22 years.

He's in place to bring healing in the wake of the Jerry Sandusky sex abuse scandal. Pons says he was stunned when the story broke last November, having counted Sandusky a friend.

Sandusky, once one of the most respected citizens in the community who was known for his lighthearted and gregarious personality, is now considered "a sullen, stone-faced, defeated"



BIG CHANGES — Tennessee native Johnny Pons (right) and his wife Kathy stand beside the Lion Shrine, a landmark at Penn State University where Pons has ministered for 22 years. The Pons have witnessed major shakeups at the 44,000-student main campus in State College since the Jerry Sandusky sex abuse scandal. (BP photo)

human being, Pons said.

Pons and others on campus are trying to process what has happened. Pons has the added responsibility of ministering to those perhaps least able to handle the turmoil — the students.

While everyone on campus sees the evil of the abuse and subsequent cover-up, Pons said, many are struggling to reconcile the Sandusky they knew personally with the Sandusky of the scandal. The legal battle and the university-sanctioned study led by

former FBI director Louis Freeh revealed the late Joe Paterno and other university administrators concealed the abuse.

The cover-up has opened Pons' eyes to his own sin, he said. "On the personal level, I am capable of prideful blindness to my own sin. In fact I am sure that I have my own blind spots and areas of sin that I need to deal with honestly," he said, a revelation he has shared on his personal blog site, ponsanity.tumblr.com.

Pons said he is also capable of

harboring information to protect himself or loved ones. "This is perhaps the area of the whole mess that should strike the fear of God into each of our hearts," he said.

Pons shared pertinent questions he must address and help students face:

■ How do I respond in truth and love to Sandusky and his family?

■ How do I respond with compassion towards the abused?

■ How do I reflect on the life and legacy of Paterno and others

involved in this scandal? Should a person be judged by his best or worst moments?

■ What sins do I tolerate and why?

■ Am I prepared for the same level of intense personal scrutiny that these men and Penn State have endured for the past few months?

These are tough questions Pons is ready to tackle not only personally, but with those seeking his counsel. As a minister, Pons believes God has a purpose in the aftermath of the scandal.

"This scandal has touched students and community alike in a way that jars us from a business-as-usual pattern, and I believe there is hope for real change," Pons said. "I believe God has a redemptive purpose in every storm."

God will open hearts to the Gospel, Pons believes, and is confident the coming months might reveal Penn State's finest hour. "We have a window but it won't stay open forever. People are wounded and it's time to step in with the healing that only God can provide. God does not waste any circumstance. He will open people's hearts."

As to the feelings he had for Penn State nearly 25 years ago, that has changed. "We have planted our lives here and I am totally invested in this university," Pons said with conviction.

Knowing that many Tennessee Baptists have already prayed for him, he requests prayer. "It [prayer] has been encouraging. God is good and I feel that."

Winter Olympics workers use Summer Olympics to plan for games

LONDON (BP) — Though the Winter Olympic Games in Russia are still 18 months away, church planters in the host city of Sochi are already hard at work to capitalize on what the "Olympic Spirit" will bring to their city.

They recently spent time in London during the Summer Olympics getting a grasp on what the opportunities would look like.

"Traditionally, Southern Baptists have used Olympic ministry as an opportunity for broad seed sowing. However, Olympic ministry can be much more than that. It can be a catalyst for church planting in the host city itself," said Earl Gillespie (not his real name), a team member for Engage Sochi, an International Mission Board initiative aimed at taking Olympic ministry beyond the opportunity for mass evangelism.

Gillespie explained the Engage Sochi strategy is for the residents of Sochi to be reached with the Gospel before, during, and after the 2014 Winter Games.

"It is our goal to use the opportunities that the Olympics will bring to Sochi to not just reach out to the people of the world who will visit the city for the games but to use this event as a way to build relationships with the people who live and work in the Sochi area," Gillespie said, "and we have already begun to do that."

The Engage Sochi church planting team, which formed after the Russian city was named as the 2014 Olympic host, has been actively involved in partnering with Central Baptist Church of Sochi for more than a year. Together they have been exploring ways to use the sporting event to connect believers with the Sochi community.

The Engage Sochi team, which arrived in London prior to the start of the Summer Games, was surprised at how the atmosphere and demeanor of the people on the streets changed after the Opening Ceremonies.

"Since the games started, people have been so open," said Kay Gillespie, who coordinates prayer efforts for the Engage Sochi initiative. "We even had one young lady thank us for coming and telling her about Jesus. If I can have those kinds of experiences in Sochi, then I cannot imagine what Jesus is going to do there."

Joining the Engage Sochi team was Danil Pankratov, a Russian Baptist pastor who partners with the team in Sochi. "I was surprised how people would talk with you and would listen to a Gospel presentation," he said. "Usually in Sochi when you try to start a conversation with people they do not want to hear and sometimes they walk away, but I am discovering that the Olympics are a celebration and I am

pretty sure that people will be more open in Russia during this time."

While in London, the team spent time in areas where they knew Russians — specifically people from Sochi — would be.

"The Russians have two exhibits here in London to promote the next Winter Olympics, and you can already see how they are getting excited about having the Winter Games in Sochi," team member Craig Dean (not his real name) said.

The team uses pin trading, a popular pastime for Olympic spectators, as a way to engage people in conversation. The specially designed Engage Sochi evangelism pin uses the colors of the Olympic rings to tell the Gospel story.

In addition to giving away the trading pins, the group included a small card that explains the colors in both English and Russian. "I really like this method," Pankratov said. "It helps you to meet people and to very quickly tell the important things about why people need salvation and why they need Jesus. I can see this being very effective in Sochi."

Pankratov added that in Sochi the team has partnered with his church to offer English classes for local residents who need or want to learn English to help them better communicate during the games.

"One of the people we met here in London lives in our neighborhood in Sochi and was very excited to hear that we are starting an English program," he said. "We now have her contact information and look forward to not just teaching her English but sharing about Jesus with her."

In addition to the 2014 Winter Olympic Games, Sochi will host the 2018 FIFA World Cup and a Formula One Racing promotional event in the summer of 2014.

"I think that God has brought these events to Sochi to allow the people in our city to be more open," Pankratov said. "As the church, we have to get on our feet and we must begin to use other methods to reach out so that even more people can hear a Gospel message during these big events."

Dean said volunteers from America are needed to partner with the Sochi church. This is key, he said, as the team takes what it has learned in London and moves back to begin efforts in Sochi.

"The bridge from London to Sochi is not complete," Dean said. "As a matter of fact, it is just starting. There are nearly 400,000 people in Sochi who need to hear the Gospel. So even without the Olympics coming to this area, there is a huge need for the Gospel there."

Grandparenting is a wonderful experience. It is different from parenting, but in some ways it can be just as hard if not harder and just as difficult and draining. But somehow it provides a different perspective about life, children, growing up, and facing the world. Grandparenting seems to be at times the joys of parenting on steroids. I always made fun of people who were grandparents and whatever it was that happened to them that melted their hearts, warped their brains, and caused them to act differently from anything they had before. I used to wonder what in the world happens to these people. Now in small measure I understand. Some would argue that grandparents have the wonderful privilege of working with human beings, their grandchildren, who are far superior to the human beings they had been incarcerated with in their home, their own children. There might be a slight bit of truth there but, in fact, that is probably not accurate. So why do grandparents go about doing what they do in relationship to grandchildren different from when they were parenting their children? I have discovered several reasons why grandparenting is different from parenting, and I will pass them along to you.

The first reason that it is different is because the pressures of life are different. It is not that there are no pressures in life. There are still stresses that we deal with, but they are different and especially when it comes to your grandchildren. Grandparents recognize the incredible, wonderful blessing of just being with these incredible little creatures known as grandkids. Just to be with them, to love them, to laugh with them, to see the beauty and blessings in their antics, and even to chuckle when they have a tantrum. Parents see every little act and comment as a 9-11 moment in their home. Grandparents on the other hand can lighten up and know that some of these things are just part of the growing up event and it is rarely the end of the world. So what do grandparents do? Instead of getting all bent out of shape and traumatized over a kid's lips poked out, they often just join in with them, love them, and enjoy the moment.



The Wonder of Grandparenting

At times, the grandparents so relate to the grandkids that they seem like they are of the same generation. Recently, a wonderful grandmother who loves her grandkids, is loved by them, spends time with them, laughs with them, and just carries on like she is one of them was supposed to keep them one day. The mother and father who were about to leave were giving serious instructions to the kids. "Now you mind your grandmother. She is in charge!" The kids listened to the instructions and were somewhat shocked. The four-year-old granddaughter expressed her amazement when she said, "Do you actually believe that you can trust her to be in charge?" Grandmother was so engaged at their level that they assumed she brought the entire decision making and immaturity that they possessed to the daily routine. The pressures are different, they are less, and that is just one of the reasons grandparents have the time, opportunity, and great blessing of enjoying their grandchildren.

Secondly, while the pressures are less the grace is greater. My parents were pretty strict disciplinarians, and they would not cut you much slack. Spare the rod and spoil the child seemed to find its way into the activities of our home more often than I wanted it to, but not with my grandparents. It is not that they would not correct us at times or redirect our thinking or activities, but they did so with a gentle rein and with loving instruction. While I

did not know it at the time, their discipline was with a large measure of grace.

I remember hearing my grandmother interpret life's experiences with grace. While I did not understand it at the time, I felt the wonder of the goodness from someone who had that view of life. Talking about the neighbor just down the street, who apparently had a terrible drinking problem, she explained the difficulties he had experienced in his life and the tragedies that had come his way in being in the war and losing a child after he returned home. One event after another seemed to have led him to become dependent on his alcohol to face each day. While excusing him may not be totally proper, seeking to understand the dilemma of his life with a measure of grace and compassion was a good thing. I can remember her just gently commenting on her own children as they struggled with one thing or another. On every occasion it would be an interpretation laced with love and grace. While I did not understand what all of that was about, I was blessed to see it modeled in her life. Grandparents have the wonderful opportunity, the privilege, and the honor to show a gracious heart.

A third thing that makes grandparenting different from parenting is that your eyes are different. Now because of the aging process grandparents' eyes are supposed to become dimmer and weaker. Maybe they have been touched by

some disease or have been affected by wear and tear, and they do not see as clearly as they once did. On the other hand they see more clearly than they ever did in their younger years. Grandparents have different eyes not just in the way they see but in what they see. Parents look at their kids and while they do not really mean to do this they probably catch themselves looking for the bad and watching for the wrong that their child may do or say. You can catch them doing that, see them when they go wrong, and hear them when they say something out of place. You can watch for those things and when you see something, it is imperative that you respond and bring discipline harsh and heavy to correct those wrong things. If you are not careful as a parent that is all your eyes will see. Grandparenting changes your eyesight. You see the good things that are happening and the wonderful achievements of your grandchildren. You can even see what other people cannot see — the enormous potential in that little wide-eyed, mischievous child. It is a kind of Godlike eyesight to know that for this child it is true when God says, "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jer. 29:11).

When a parent sees a child mess up, it is an opportunity for scolding and correction. When a grandparent sees the child mess up, it is just another opportunity to say, "Try again! You can do it!" Their hearts long to accomplish and achieve. I think that it is important for all of us to realize that good and healthy parents are also good, involved, and caring grandparents are needed to help children in their developmental process. All of us bring to the table of a child's life what God has invested in us and given us the privilege in which to participate. It gives a wholesome approach to life and an incredible view that a child would not have apart from all of us. We can benefit and grow with our children and grandchildren. Thank God for your parents and grandparents. We all are made better by each other.

The author can be contacted at jfutral@mbcb.org.

LIFEWAY

cont. from p. 1

100,000 teenagers each year as two of the largest providers of

Christian student conferences.

Leaders of both ministries emphasized that while their camp experiences are programatically different, each minis-

try is committed to seeing the lives of students transformed by Jesus and His Word.

"LifeWay and Student Life share a passion for serving

the church and helping the next generation grow in their devotion to Christ and commitment to reach the world for Him," said Ben Trueblood,

LifeWay's director of student ministries. "That passion for young people makes this relationship possible and beneficial to the Kingdom."

Revivals & Homecomings

► **First Church, Winona:** 175th anniversary, Sept. 9; registration, 9:30 a.m., with lunch following worship, music, presentations, and recognition of former pastors and dignitaries.
► **Pine Hill Church, Enterprise:** Homecoming and revival, Aug. 26 - 29; Sun., 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch at noon; Sun. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Gary Kelley, speaker; Vickie Heathcock, music; Danny Bullock, pastor.
► **Harmony Church, Lincoln County:** Revival, Aug. 26 - 29; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Clarence Young, speaker; Tim Posey, music; Owen King, pastor.
► **New Hope Church, Lee County:** Homecoming, Aug. 26; worship, 11 a.m., followed

by potluck lunch; Rickey Blythe, speaker; Brent Sanders, music; Lowell Johnson, pastor.
► **Concord Church, Benton-Tippah Association:** Revival, Aug. 26 - 30; Sun., 6 p.m.; Mon. - Thurs., 7 p.m.; Lyndle Davis, speaker; Jerry Crawford, music; Robert E. Walker, pastor.
► **Holly Grove Church, Simpson County:** Homecoming, Aug. 26; singing, 10:30 a.m., followed by covered dish luncheon and annual cemetery meeting.
► **Euclatubba Church, Seltill:** Homecoming, Aug. 26; services, 10 a.m., followed by lunch; Lowell Walker, speaker; Cody Farrar and Breaking Grass, music.
► **Hamburg Church, Hamburg:** 125th anniversary and revival,

Aug. 26 - 29; Sun., Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by meal and afternoon singing with Chosen; Mon. - Wed., covered dish, 6 p.m.; worship, 7 p.m.; Matt Buckles, speaker; Jimmy Bilbo, music; Mary Cupit, pianist.
► **Siloam Church, Magee:** Homecoming, Aug. 26; worship, 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch; Fred Harwell, speaker; Beverly Roberts and Asia Flora, music; Raymond Jeffcoat, pastor.
► **Faith Church, Silver Creek:** Revival, Aug. 24 - 26; Fri. - Sat., 7 p.m.; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by fellowship meal and 1 p.m.; Jessie Rodriguez, speaker; Dennis Meistrup and Sue Ballard, music; Ron Ballard, pastor.

MS POSITIONS

FBC MATHISTON IS SEEKING A FULL-TIME MINISTER OF STUDENTS. Interested parties may submit resumes by e-mail at mathiston@bellsouth.net or by mail at P.O. Box 280, Mathiston, MS 39752.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, BEAUMONT, MS. IS SEARCHING FOR A FULL TIME PASTOR. Send resumes to P.O. Box 978, Beaumont, Ms. 39423 or call 601-784-3890.

FBC INDIANOLA, MS IS SEEKING A FULL TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC. Please mail resumes to First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 368, Indianola, MS 38751 or e-mail them to fbcindianola@gmail.com

EASTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH OF INDIANOLA, MS. IS IN SEARCH OF A FULLTIME SENIOR PASTOR. Please send resumes to the church at P.O. Box 466, Indianola, Ms. 38751, Attn. Search Committee or by e-mail to williamsharp@bellsouth.net.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF SUMMIT, MS. SEEKS A PART TIME PRESCHOOL MINISTRY DIRECTOR to oversee the Preschool Ministry of the church in coordination with the children's minister. Experience leading children is required, and a college degree is preferred. Please send resumes to Dean Pearce at dean@fbcsummit.org.

HIGHPOINTE BAPTIST CHURCH, RAYMOND, MS. IS SEEKING A PART-TIME MINISTER TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH. This is a small church with a loving heart and great potential. Please send resumes to jerryflier@gmail.com, or call (601) 259-2248, or mail to 4543 Learned Rd., Raymond, MS 39154.

OUR PASTOR OF TWENTY-SIX YEARS, BRO. DALE EASLEY, HAS TAKEN RETIREMENT AFTER SUFFERING A STROKE. FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH VARDAMAN, OF VARDAMAN, MS, HAS FORMED A PULPIT SEARCH COMMITTEE AND WILL BE TAKING RESUMES FOR THIS POSITION. If you are interested, please call the church office (662)682-7458 or e-mail fbcv@tds.net.

EAST PLEASANT GROVE, QUITMAN IS SEEKING A BI VOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC/YOUTH. Send resumes to 4126 CR 672 Quitman, Ms 39355, attention Pastor, or e-mail to Pastor Josh Meadows at jmeadows@rockwellmail.com

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH VARDAMAN OF VARDAMAN, MS IS SEEKING A MUSIC MINISTER. Please send resume to: First Baptist Church Vardaman P.O. Box 173 Vardaman, MS 38878 or e-mail: fbcv@tds.net

What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the

HOUSE TOPS.

Matthew 10:27 NAS

August 23, 2012

HouseTops is a Baptist Record supplement produced by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Communication Services.

2012 JANUARY BIBLE STUDY PREVIEW CLINICS

THE GREATEST WEEK IN HISTORY:
LUKE'S ACCOUNT OF THE PASSION WEEK

Led by: Rob Futral, Pastor
Broadmoor Baptist Church, Madison, Miss.

What an honor to have our own Rob Futral, author of the Learner Guide for this study, leading both clinics.

GREATEST

Friendship Baptist Church, Grenada, Miss.
Tuesday, September 18, 2012

Main Street Baptist Church, Hattiesburg, Miss.
Thursday, September 20, 2012

9:00 a.m. - noon

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

No cost but please preregister. Books will not be provided.

Sponsored by: Sunday School Department, MS Baptist Convention Board,
Contact 1-800-748-1651, ext 291, or 601-292-3291 to preregister.

"Embrace Today!" Women's Retreat

Dates: Friday, October 19 - Saturday, October 20, 2012

Time: Fri., Oct. 19, 3:00 p.m. - Sat., Oct. 20, 1:00 p.m.

Location: Garaywa Camp & Conference Center

Cost: \$15 Registration Fee + meals & lodging

Refreshing Conferences in store for ALL women will include...
Re"juvenate" Your Body! - Re"Boot" Your Prayer Life! - Re"Cycle" Your Ministry - Re"Discover" the Vision.

Special Guest Speaker:

Nancy Grigsby

Women of Purpose Speak
Niceville, Fla.

visit: http://mbcb.org/events_details.aspx?ID=2586

Contact WMU of the MCB for more information: 1-800-748-1651, ext. 319,
601-292-3319

Transformational Sunday School Training

In the following locations there will be conferences for all age groups on: How to Make the Bible Come Alive and How To Tell the Story of Jesus.

Saturday, August 25: 9 a.m. - noon - First Baptist Church, Tupelo

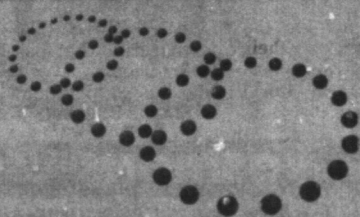
Saturday, September 8: 9 a.m. - noon - New Hope, Gulfport

Thursday, September 13: 6 - 9 p.m. - North Greenwood, Greenwood

We will model actual classroom teaching for a preschool, a children, student, and an adult Sunday School class:

Saturday, September 22: 9 a.m. - noon - Poplar Springs Drive, Meridian

Sponsored by: Sunday School Department, MS Baptist Convention Board,
Contact 1-800-748-1651, ext. 291, or 601-292-3291 locally.



Transformational
Sunday School

Mother/Daughter Overnight at Garaywa

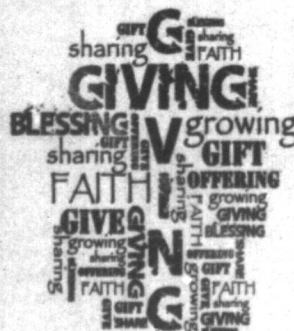
1st-6th grade girls and their moms will spend quiet time together, worship & praise, meet missionaries, make crafts and more! Join the fun and fellowship this fall.

October 5-6 & October 12-13

All overnights begin at 5 p.m. on Friday and end by 2:00 p.m. on Saturday.

Cost: \$50 per person

Visit: www.garaywa.org under EVENTS, Mother/Daughter Overnight, for Registration Forms.



One-Day Stewardship Revival

The one activity with the most potential for creating a culture of generosity in your congregation is a Stewardship Workshop.

For more information contact the Stewardship Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board at 601.292.3347.

MARGARET LACKEY OFFERING FOR STATE MISSIONS

unexpected

THE FUNDS RAISED BY MARGARET LACKEY OFFERING GO TO:

- Christian Women's/Men's Job Corps
- College Outreach
- Criminal Justice Ministry
- New Church Starts
- Central Hills Campgrounds
- Community Mission Projects
- Camp Garaywa
- Port Ministries
- Cross Cultural Evangelism
- Disaster Relief
- Language/Deaf Ministry
- Mission Volunteers

\$2 MILLION GOAL

DiscipleLIFE

The Life You Were Meant to Live

September 28-29

Morrison Heights, Clinton

Speaker
Bruce Venable
Arkansas

Music
Marc Lewis Band
Southaven

- For all college students
- Find opportunities to be involved
- Get info about summer missions

Contact your BSU director or church minister to register or contact Collegiate Ministry @ 800.748.1651

\$8 Registration Fee

College Student Conference 2012

Sponsored by Mississippi Collegiate Ministry and Baptist Student Union
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board - A Ministry of the Cooperative Program

Mississippi Missionary Parents Fellowship

Dates: Friday, September 14 - Saturday, September 15

Time: Fri. 2:00 p.m. - Sat. 1:30 p.m.

Location: Garaywa Camp & Conference Center, Clinton

Cost: Lodging & Meals

(See Registration Form on Web)

Join the fellowship of Parents of MS Missionaries - prayer times for missionary children, reports from the field, special support through MS ministries and Macedonian Call. Please register by September 7. Check-in begins at 2:00 p.m. on Friday, September 14.

visit: http://mbcb.org/events_details.aspx?ID=2533



Mississippi Missionary Fellowship

Dates: Saturday, September 15, 2012

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Location: Garaywa Camp & Conference Center, Clinton

Cost: No charge, please register for meals

Join the fellowship for all former and currently active missionaries for a time of support and sharing. There is no charge for lunch but please make meal reservations by September 7.

visit: http://mbcb.org/events_details.aspx?ID=2534



For more information contact the WMU Office of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board: 1-800-748-1651, ext. 319, 601-292-3319

2012 REGIONAL SENIOR RALLIES

\$1 at the door

Dates for Rallies:

NORTHERN RALLY:

Tuesday, August 28

Neshoba Association Family Center

Choir: The Singing Saints, FBC, Newton

Preacher: Sonny Atkins, Mendenhall

Schedule:

8:30 a.m. - Registration/Refreshments

9:00 a.m. - Choir & Preacher

10:30 a.m. - Break-out Sessions

11:30 a.m. - Adjourn

For Information:

Neshoba Baptist Association, 601-656-1820

neshobabaptist@yahoo.com

SOUTHERN RALLY:

Thursday, August 30

Pearl River Association

(McNeill, Close to Picayune)

Choir: First Baptist Church, McComb

Preacher: Jerry Mixon, Madison

Schedule:

8:30 a.m. - Registration/Refreshments

9:00 a.m. - Choir & Preacher

10:30 a.m. - Break-out Sessions

11:30 a.m. - Adjourn

For Information:

Pearl River Association, 601-798-2372

prba@cyberonic.com

ANNUAL STATE CHURCH LIBRARY MINISTRY CONFERENCE

Dates: October 5-6, 2012

Time: Registration begins 9:00 a.m. on Oct. 5

Location: First Baptist Church, Kosciusko, Miss.

Cost: \$25 per person. Registration deadline is September 21, 2012.

The CLM newsletter, which includes conference information and registration, will soon be ready to mail. To see it now, check our Web site for a copy of the newsletter.

New this year ... you will be able to register online.

We look forward to another awesome time of training and fellowship.

For more information contact Judy Chen, Communication Services at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

1-800-748-1651, ext 378, 601-292-3378



Designed for:

Children (Grades 4-6)

Student Drillers (Grades 7-12)

Adults who teach Children's Bible Drill

Adults who teach Student Bible Drill

High School Speakers (Grades 10-12)

Fall Bible Drill Retreat

September 21-22, 2012 • Garaywa Camp and Conference Center



MINISTERS' WIVES CONFERENCE

October 29, 2012

1:30 - 3:00 p.m.

FBC, Jackson

Christian Life Center Dining Room

Guest Speaker:

Janie Walters

"Blow A Bubble Not A Gasket!" is the topic for this year's conference. This is not only good advice, but also a delightful presentation by Janie. Stress is a major issue today, and Christians are not exempt! This is not just another stress management presentation. It is packed with practical ideas to start using today. Audiences will come away laughing, refreshed, and fully equipped to manage stress.

Preregistration is encouraged so we can be better prepared. Contact the Pastors/Leadership Development Dept. of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board for registration information.

1-800-748-1651, ext 305, or 601-292-3305

cwtaylor@mbcb.org

Pray this day for...

August 24 – September 6, 2012

"Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the Harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

-Matthew 9:38

Pray for: **Janet* Hol-loway**, IMB missionary ministering to European Peoples in Russia through student evangelism.

Pray for: **Daniel and Claudia* Hood**, IMB missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples in Kenya through church and home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Dore* and Valery Hulse**, IMB missionaries ministering to European Peoples in Portugal through church planting, church and home outreach evangelism.

Pray for: **Tony* and Denita* Inmon**, IMB missionaries ministering to American Peoples in Uruguay through church planting, church and home outreach evangelism.

Pray for: **Floyd* and Sharon* Johnston**, IMB missionaries ministering to American Peoples in Brazil through church planting, church and home outreach evangelism.

Pray for: **Raymond* and Cynthia Hodgins**, missionaries ministering to deaf peoples in the United States through sports, church and home outreach evangelism.

Pray for: **Jeffery* and Uesa* Holeman**, IMB missionaries ministering to American Peoples in Peru through community, church and home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Millard and Susan* Jones**, missionaries ministering to European and East Asian Peoples in Canada through student evangelism.

Pray for: **John* and Melinda* Kyzar**, IMB missionaries ministering to European Peoples in the Czech Republic as a "Personalized" church and home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Henry* and Linda Lee**, missionaries ministering to East Asian Peoples in the United States through church planting, church and home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for a team of eight from **Sturgis BC, Sturgis**, traveling to Thailand to minister through evangelism September 3 - 14.

Pray for: **Timothy* and Rebecca* Lightsey**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples in the United States through strategy coordination, church and home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Asbury and Jeannie* Martin**, IMB missionaries ministering to American Peoples in Argentina through church and home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Robert* and Janice Mooney**, IMB missionaries ministering to European Peoples in the Latvia through strategy coordination, church and home outreach and evangelism.

*These International Mission Board missionaries claim Mississippi as their home state. The IMB missionaries listed in the HouseTops prayer calendar are currently active in 2-4 year terms or in career service.

Bivocational/Small Church Ministers and Wives Council Meeting & Supper

Monday, October 29, 2012

Bivo/Small Church Area Coordinators Meeting, Baptist Building Sky Room, 4th Floor, 1:30 p.m.

Bivo/Small Church Council Meeting, Baptist Building Sky Room, 4th Floor, 3:00 p.m.

Bivo/Small Church Ministers and Wives Banquet, Baptist Building Sky Room, 4th Floor, 5:00 p.m.

Registration is preferred for banquet, so we will have a meal for you

Please contact the Pastor/Leadership Development Dept. to make reservations: 1-800-748-1651, ext. 305, 601-292-3305 or cwright@mbcb.org

AMD & Seminary Extension Directors Breakfast

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

7:00-8:00 a.m.,

Baptist Building Chapel

In order that we might prepare, please notify Keith Gordon, 1-800-748-1651, ext. 307, 601-292-3307, or kgordon@mbcb.org if you will attend. Wives are also invited.

FALL CHAPLAINS' TRAINING

"To Provide More Effective Ministry for Professional and Volunteer Chaplains and All Interested Persons"

September 21, 2012

8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Cost: \$10

**Mississippi Baptist Convention Board Building
515 Mississippi Street
Jackson, Miss.**

**601-292-3334 or 1-800-748-1651, ext. 334
cwright@mbcb.org**

Session 1:

Hospice Chaplain Qualifications and Duties

Session 2:

Spirituality at the End of Life

Session 3:

Taking Care of Yourself

Session 4:

Spiritual Care for the Elderly

Session 5:

Cultural Considerations in End of Life Care

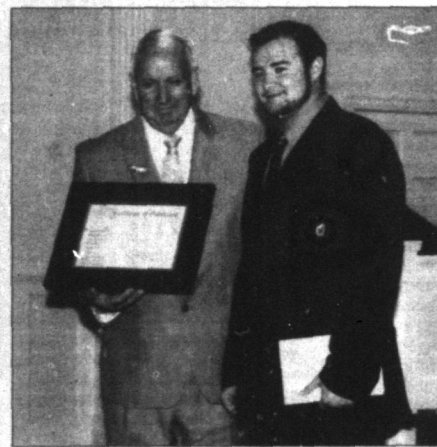
HOUSE TOPS

Just for the Record

The youth from **NESHOPA CHURCH, NESHOPA COUNTY**, volunteered at Neshoba County Association to sort and pack school supplies for children in Neshoba County and Philadelphia city schools. The association assisted over 100 children.



HURRICANE CREEK CHURCH, MARION COUNTY, ordained Justin Fortenberry to the gospel ministry. He has been called to Spring Hill Church, Wesson. Shown are pastor Curtis Roland and Fortenberry.



WOODVILLE CHURCH, WOODVILLE, held deacon emeritus services for Julius Carter July 29. Carter has served for 44 years as deacon. Shown are Alton Foster, Billy Joe Jones, Carter, and pastor Rob Muncy.



SHILOH CHURCH, CALHOUN COUNTY ASSOCIATION, recently held a deacon ordination service for David Magness and Sidney Parker. Shown are Buford Usry, Magness, Barbara Magness, pastor John Hearn, Parker, and June Parker.



Youth from **FIRST CHURCH, CALHOUN CITY**, recently attended Super Summer at Mississippi College. Shown are Jordan England, Sarah Hardin, Jace Leachman, Reagan Hardin, Aaron Sibley, and Hunter Hardin.



The Busy Hands Sewing Group of **NORTH LONG BEACH CHURCH, LONG BEACH**, made 156 dresses for children in Nicaragua, which were hand delivered by Richard and Jordan Strebeck. Shown are some of the children wearing the dresses.

An anonymous member of **GRACE UNITED CHURCH, DECATUR**, gave member Michelle Addy the opportunity to take a two-year course in church music at New Orleans Seminary. Addy now serves as choir director at the church.



In other Church News:

➤ **First Church, Runnelstown**, will host The Inspirations in concert Sept. 14, 7:30 p.m. Love offering.

➤ **First Church, Greenwood**, is hosting a Beth Moore simulcast presented by Living Proof Live Sept. 15, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Tickets, presale only, are \$25, including lunch. Call (662) 453-3075 or (928) 246-0321 for ticket sales or more information.

➤ The youth of **New Zion Church, Braxton**, are sponsoring a co-ed volleyball tournament Sept. 8, 9 a.m., for church-affiliated teams. Entry fee, \$50; \$1 donation for spectators, with a two game guarantee. Concessions available. Registration deadline, Aug. 31; for more information, call (601) 515-6372 or 988-5793.

➤ The women's ministry of **First Church, Starkville**, is hosting the Living Proof Live Beth Moore Simulcast Sept. 15, 8:30 a.m. - 3:15 p.m. with lunch break at 10:30 a.m. Tickets, \$10, available at the door; preferred advance sales by calling (662) 323-5633.

➤ **Bluff Springs Church, Magnolia**, will host the Southern Plainsmen in concert Sept. 2, 6:30 p.m.



BETHEL CHURCH, SMITH ASSOCIATION, collected school supplies for Smith County schools as a Christmas in August project. Shown are Elizabeth Sullivan, Abby McGriff, Jacob McGriff, and Cammie Rayner.

RETREAT

cont. from p. 1

with the Lord, when we're scared but we know we're safe."

Central Hills Retreat hosted campers from 130 Mississippi Baptist churches, representing 61 Baptist associations. There were eight non-Mississippi Baptist churches represented, from Louisiana, Virginia, Georgia, and Honduras.

It takes a significant amount of manpower to minister at Central Hills Retreat. Central Hills utilized 29 student staffers, six part-time maintenance employees, nine part-time foodservice workers, one part-time summer office employee, five full-time employees, eight guest missionaries, three ham radio operators, 12 volunteers, eight camp pastors, two nurses, and three counselors in training, for a total of 86 workers.

"I tell our workers we might have a good week or a bad week, but we're gonna have a week," Ray said. "The kids are here for one week, but we'll be here for ten weeks so you can't fake it here. If the workers aren't prepared to be here, it'll show. Iron sharpens iron — these younger boys and girls see our staff work hard, read their Bibles, and hear them quote Scripture, and the really neat thing is that all during the week they hear 18 to 24-year-old staff talk about how they came to know the Lord and how God has worked in their lives. It makes it real. I don't know anywhere else where you can get that."

Central Hills Retreat hosted a number of special camps between May 1 and Aug. 6, with 557 total participants in these camps. One unique ministry is the Special Needs Camp for Adults, which

this year hosted 118 participants.

"I don't know if Mississippi Baptists know about our adult Special Needs Camp. Mississippi leads the nation in the number of people affected by developmental disabilities. We have this camp for adults, and those adults come to camp and get treated like any other group of campers," Ray said.

"This thrills them. They have all the activities, they have worship, they receive awards. It's like a second staff week for me, because it helps the staff realize that God gifts everybody. There are probably about 20,000 people directly connected with Mississippi Baptist churches who have developmental disabilities."

Central Hills hosts the camp the first Monday on or after Memorial Day.

When asked about how Central Hills Retreat benefits from gifts to the Margaret Lackey Offering for State Missions, Ray said, "Bottom line — we couldn't do camp without Margaret Lackey. I don't think

there's a single camp in Mississippi [outside of Mississippi Baptist camps] that offers the camp experience we can, at the cost we charge for a three- or five-day camp. We're the least expensive of any camp I know. That's why so many unchurched kids come here — churches can afford to bring them. Other camps charge three, four, even five hundred dollars a week. What average family can afford that?"

"We provide a great experience. We have fine pastors and leaders. We have a Junior Olympic-sized pool, we have horseback riding, we have a good riflery program, archery, canoeing, high and low ropes course, ball field, air-conditioned gymnasium, all for \$165 a week."

Central Hills Retreat is available for use by many other groups. During the off season, the camp provides a convenient and excellent location for meetings and church events. During this year's off-season, the camp hosted 65 groups involving 2,201 people.

BIBLIOCIPHER

HIE YB LYHL ZBIL XB DZ RDLY XB: LYB

MHLYBN YHLY IGL ABML XB HAGIB;

MGN D EG HARHTZ LYGZB LYDISZ

LYHL FABHZZ YDX.

VGYI BDSYL: LRBILT-IDIB

Clue: H=A

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Genesis Four: Six

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004. © 2005

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Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are

not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either e-mail, CD or DVD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

CLASSIFIEDS

STAINED GLASS: new windows and repairs. Hopper Stained Glass, Jackson, 601-502-0202.

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Need a light?

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Embracing Responsibilities • Ruth 3:10-13a; 4:1-4a, 9-10, 13, 17

A local news program in the Jackson area has a nightly segment entitled, "Who's Accountable." The station focuses upon someone who has been wronged or something that has been grossly mismanaged. Using their best investigative skills, the reporters seek to zero in on who missed their responsibility, and then to hold them accountable.

Our final lesson in this unit focuses upon the need for Christians to be committed in their relationships. Boaz, the kinsman of Naomi, serves as our character study. The biblical truth we want to learn is: believers exhibit commitment in their relationships by carrying out God-given moral responsibilities.

1. Accepting Responsibility (Ruth 3:10-13a)

To understand Ruth 3:1-18, we need to keep three aspects of the story in mind. First, the well-being of a woman was embedded in her relationship to her father or husband. Naomi and Ruth would not long survive as "detached females" in that ancient society. To make matters worse from the societal perspective, both women were widows. Naomi was old, and Ruth was a foreigner. Second, the rendezvous between Ruth and Boaz must not be viewed as a tawdry encounter. Ruth was a woman of "noble character" (3:11; NIV). The same Hebrew term, *chayil*, was used to describe Boaz (2:1), who is everywhere presented as a man of faith in word and deed (2:4-

16). Third, in Ancient Israel when a man died leaving no male heir the law of Levirate marriage provided for offspring to be raised up through his wife by a "guardian-redeemer," a goel. The "guardian-redeemer" also had the responsibility of being sure ancestral lands stayed within the family. Naomi prompted Ruth to approach Boaz about this matter.

2. Acting with Integrity (Ruth 4:1-4a)

Boaz was more than willing to accept the responsibility of the "guardian-redeemer," but he realized another kinsman was entitled to the privilege ahead of him (3:12). Boaz acted with integrity. He brought the matter to the attention of the nearer kinsman and of the Bethlehem elders (4:1-4). Boaz at first focused on the ancestral land belonging to Naomi's deceased husband, Elimelek. The nearer kinsman wanted the land and agreed to buy it.

However, the goel or "guardian-kinsman" also had familial responsibilities too (4:4b-8). Not wishing to jeopardize his own estate, the near kinsman abnegated his rights and responsibilities to Boaz.

Boaz was positioned to accept full responsibility for the welfare of Ruth, Naomi, and also to maintain Elimelek's land. Most importantly, he had acted with complete integrity, bringing the entire matter to the attention of the ruling elders, and settling the issue in a publicly recognized manner.

3. Embracing a Secure Future (Ruth 4:9-10, 13, 17)

Boaz moved quickly to accept the responsibilities of the "guardian-redeemer." He purchased "all the property" of Naomi's deceased husband and sons (4:9). He also "acquired Ruth the Moabite" as his wife "to maintain the name of the dead with his property" (4:10a). The law of the Levirate had worked. Elimelek's ancestral lands and his name would not "disappear from among his family or from his hometown" (4:10b). Boaz had followed the rules, had acted with integrity, and had exhibited commitment to the needs of Naomi and Ruth.

Just as important as Boaz's integrity and taking responsibility was the fact the elders and townspeople witnessed the entire transaction. Boaz said, "Today you are

witnesses!" (4:10c); to which the crowd responded, "We are witnesses" (4:11). No one could claim Boaz illegally seized the land or took advantage of a widow woman. Boaz, Ruth, and Naomi embraced a secure future by following the Lord's direction in their daily lives.

What about believers today? What God-given moral responsibilities do we have to meet? Properly caring for our children, helping our aging parents, and ministering those who have little, are examples of some moral responsibilities God has placed before us. We exhibit moral commitment by accepting responsibilities that contribute to the physical and spiritual care of our families and others. In the process, we need to act with integrity in all our relationships, just as Boaz did in the matter of the Levirate marriage. Integrity exercised now, enriches and secures our future.

Boaz secured his own future as well as Ruth's and Naomi's. Indeed, Boaz and Ruth are mentioned in Jesus' family tree (Matt. 1:5). Ultimately, a secure future does not refer necessarily to physical well-being or material possessions but to the rewards of right relationships with the Lord and with other people. Begin embracing responsibilities!

VanHorn is dean of Christian Studies at Mississippi College, Clinton.

Persevere in Obedience • Jeremiah 37-38

Jeremiah had plenty of reasons to own stock in crying towels. When he spoke the word of the Lord, he was usually ignored. For his earnestness in sharing truth, he was routinely chunked into prison or rudely slammed-dunked into the oozy mud of the local cistern. His arm and ankle jewelry consisted of shackles. His ministry spanned the reigns of the final four corrupt kings of Judah. Observing the steady downfall of his beloved nation must have been excruciating. The ultimate destruction and coming exile had been forth-told with God-pronounced accuracy by this faithful forth-teller. His retirement plan was leaking interest and lacking substance but he pressed on, knowing his eternal investment was secure. His prophetic call was his motivation. His heart was united in brokenness with that of his Caller. Finally, as we will see today, his discouragement was dwarfed by his determination to persevere in full obedience. Jeremiah proved to be an example of the person God could use. So, how's your serve?

We have come to our fourth and final lesson in becoming the person God can use. Observing the life and ministry of the prophet Jeremiah, we have focused on our call to serve, our need for brokenness in ministry and our antidote for discouragement.

All three of those points of "followship" become moot if we fail to walk fully in personal, daily, public AND private obedience to the Father. None of these lessons will bear spiritual fruit in our lives if we drop the obedience ball.

After serving twenty years on staff at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, I resigned to follow the Lord in full time evangelism in the year 2000. The Lord had confirmed His call on my life for this present work through many avenues of communication. The Holy Spirit spoke to me in my bible study time. The Word of God proved what I believed He was saying to my heart. Then, our president, Dr. Chuck Kelley, preached a message in chapel that gripped my soul. The line that tethered me rang true in my pilgrimage: "Servants of God must hold loosely everything except obedience." I knew that I had to be willing to let go of everyone and everything

and every pursuit and obey.

That first step of obedience is simply to let go and follow. Twelve years later, I realize that initial step was the easiest one to take. At the time, it seemed like the most difficult. Looking back, I know and confess that the walk of daily obedience is the true measure of personal surrender to the One Who called me. When I see my Lord, I want to be able to say that I heard Him and I did my best to obey Him.

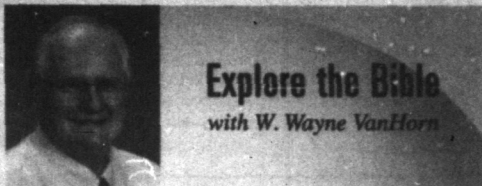
Jeremiah lived in obedience to God even when it meant immediate personal danger and regular persecution. Even in face to face meetings with King Zedekiah, Jeremiah told the truth. The king was given many opportunities to repent and return and avoid destruction. He listened. He even showed some kindness to Jeremiah in his prison accommodations. In spite of these glimmers of possible compliance, Zedekiah refused to change and refused to lead the

nation of Judah in the right path.

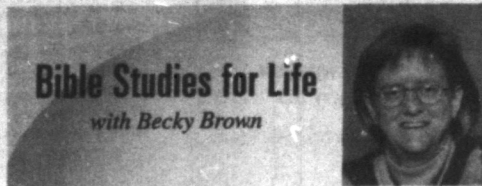
Jeremiah lived in obedience to God even when he was betrayed by his "friends" and relatives and hometown compadres. No matter what, he arose every morning, put on his prophet clothes, dried his ever-present tears and sallied forth to proclaim the message of God to the people of God. These "people of God" continued to serve the impotent gods (little "g") and worship the idle idols of their pagan neighbors. Even when it was obvious that no one cared, few were listening and even the ones who acted like they were listening never intended to obey, Jeremiah still proclaimed the truth.

Life goals of the obedient servant should be to listen to God, to lean on God, to learn from God and to leave the results to God. We are not responsible for the response of the listeners. We are held accountable for our obedience to fulfill our assignment. Public obedience is only as effective as our private, personal walk with God. The One Who calls us is the One Who walks with us. He knows whether or not we have obeyed with our whole heart. Anyone can serve, but only those who obey will receive the gold medal of faithfulness.

Brown is the staff evangelist at First Church, Richland.



Explore the Bible
with W. Wayne VanHorn



Bible Studies for Life
with Becky Brown

STETZER

cont. from p.2

a traditional view of marriage remain silent and act as if nothing is happening as homosexual teenagers are bullied into suicide or suffer physical violence, they should not expect to be taken seriously when they decry violence against one of their own.

It goes both ways. When we demonize others, someone may feel empowered to commit an act of violence. Perhaps the pundits will shout it this time as well. I hope they will shout accurately, should they decide to shout at all.

A collective of pro-LGBT groups released a statement saying they "utterly reject and condemn such violence." This is an appropriate response, and one

that must remain consistent from both sides of the debate.

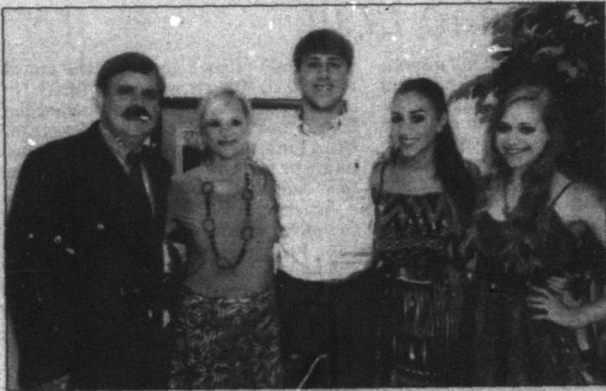
However, if LGBT groups want to "reject and condemn such violence," part of the key will be in the language used. It is time to stop demonizing people like Christians who believe they are living out their faith by believing and teaching its values with regards to morality and marriage.

Respectful and civil discussion of the issues is essential. We must be able to disagree without demonizing or labeling as "haters" those with whom we disagree. My hope is that we will all learn this (Christians, conservatives, liberals, atheists, LGBT, and more) before more violence occurs.

Stetzer is president of LifeWay

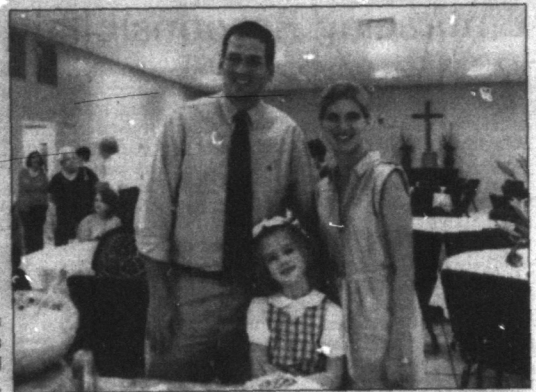
Research, a division of LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville. This column first appeared on his blog, EdStetzer.com, and appears here courtesy of Baptist Press. Some factual details about the events to which this commentary refers were added by the editor of The Baptist Record. Stetzer may be contacted through his blog at <http://www.edstetzer.com/>.

Staff Changes



FIRST CHURCH, HOLLY SPRINGS, has called Joe Lusby as pastor. Lusby holds degrees from the University of Mississippi, Southwestern Seminary, and Louisiana Baptist University. He comes from First Church, Greenfield, Tenn., and has pastored churches in Braxton, Olive Branch, and Tunica. He is shown with his wife Patty and his three children, Kyle, Kayla, and Kristen.

FIRST CHURCH, FULTON, has called Casey Hughes as pastor. He is shown with his wife Tina and daughter Sadie Claire.



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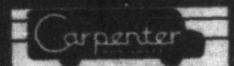
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